



ARL is an Authority on Nutrition and the Science of Balancing Body Chemistry Through Hair Tissue Mineral Analysis!

Hair Tissue Mineral Analysis


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Retest Interpretations

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Retest Interpretations

A person may feel better, yet a mineral analysis retest reveals worsened ratios or no change. Conversely, a person may feel the same or worse, yet the retest shows improvement. Why does this occur? In some cases, we simply do not know, as many factors can influence a hair analysis. But often there are good explanations for paradoxical readings.

Compensations And Adaptations

A key to these phenomena is understanding adaptation. A fundamental principle of nutritional balancing is that our bodies survive by compensating or adapting to stress. Adaptations are biochemical changes reflected in altered mineral levels and ratios on a hair test. Taken together, the altered levels and ratios are called homeostatic states.

For example, very slow oxidation is a homeostatic state characterized by the tendency for low energy, depression and low blood sugar. It is, however, the best the body can do at the time. Very fast oxidation is another homeostatic state with different symptoms. High levels of toxic metals is a third state and so forth.

I Feel Better, But The Test Is Worse

The primary reason this occurs is *decompensation*. After several weeks or months on a nutrition program, nutrients are replenished and energy improves. The body then does not need to compensate as much and a change of equilibrium or homeostasis occurs. Occasionally, a temporary increased imbalance occurs.

An example is a patient with a good zinc level, in spite of symptoms such as prostate enlargement, skin problems, decreased sense of taste and smell, poor digestion or other zinc deficiency symptoms. On a second or third test, the zinc level may drop precipitously, yet the patient reports feeling better. What happened?

The zinc reading was originally displaced upwards, to balance something else or by a toxic metal such as cadmium. Cadmium and other toxic metals can cause physiological mineral levels to appear higher in the hair. As energy increases, cadmium is eliminated from the body. As cadmium is released, zinc replaces it in the tissues and for a while less zinc is excreted into the hair tissue. The retention of the zinc, along with cadmium elimination, causes improvement in symptoms.

A second example is a chronically ill (compensated) patient with a fairly balanced oxidation rate on the first hair test. This occurs commonly. After one or several tests, the oxidation rate may become very slow or very fast, indicating severe energy loss. However, the patient reports feeling better.

In this case, the body had compensated for nutrient imbalances by accumulating toxic metals that temporarily balanced the oxidation rate. Cadmium, for example, will raise sodium levels. Lead can replace calcium. In spite of a fairly balanced oxidation rate, the person did not feel well because of the presence of the toxic metals, often hidden deep within the tissues. As body chemistry improved, the body began to eliminate the toxic metals, replacing them with physiological minerals. The person begins to feel better. Yet the oxidation rate may reveal the underlying imbalance and look worse for a while.

A second reason the test may look worse but the patient feels better is if the patient gains relief from an important symptom. This may produce psychological well-being in the patient, even though other imbalances exist.

A third reason for an apparent worsening of the test in spite of symptomatic improvement is the practitioner may not understand or may not notice the improvements. For example, higher toxic metals usually means elimination of metals, not a worsening of toxicity. An unbalanced oxidation rate may grab one's attention, causing one to overlook an improved sodium/potassium ratio or improved phosphorus or zinc level.

No Change In The Test

There are several reasons why there may be no change in the hair test, but the patient feels better. Possible reasons include:

- A diet or lifestyle change increases well-being, but has not yet impacted body chemistry enough to show up on the test.
- The practitioner overlooks a subtle improved ratio or level.
- The hair was not sampled correctly. A sample cut away from the scalp will not show recent changes.
- The change may be too subtle to see on one test. For example, a copper level that is rising from 2.5 mg% to 8.5 mg% over the 3 month sampling period will be averaged resulting in a reading of 5.5 mg%. Over the next 3 months, a decrease in the copper level from 9 mg% to 2 mg% will be averaged to also produce a reading of 5.5 mg%. The reading will be the same, but the meaning is very different!
- The only way to detect such a subtle change would be to retest sooner. Eventually, of course, the trend in body chemistry will be revealed, but on a temporary basis it can seem as though nothing has changed.

A Better Test, But Feeling Worse

A patient with an improved test can feel worse for several reasons.

- The most common reason is a healing reaction or retracing reaction. This can give rise to many kinds of symptoms. Most do not last long, but chronic conditions may require months for retracing. One patient began to dissolve old kidney stones, which then began to pass, causing extreme discomfort until all had passed.
- As health improves, new challenges may occur in a person's life, creating anxiety or other symptoms.
- The patient may have forgotten some of his original complaints. For this reason, it is always wise to keep a written record of *all* symptoms and conditions at the beginning of treatment. When a person says there is no improvement, you can refer to this sheet and ask about each symptom. Often half are gone and forgotten.
- Occasionally, improved tests do not correlate with feeling better because the patients increase their activity level. This is common with fatigued patients who are anxious to get back to their old routine. As they improve, they increase their activities, using up the extra energy they gained. As a result, they may not feel better. Careful questioning may reveal an increased activity level, needing fewer naps, or some other subtle improvement.

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